

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /011 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7258

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FOR ARA/ECA - RONDON

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, AR, US

SUBJECT: AP STORY ON AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT

REF: RONDON/CHAPLIN TELCON 9/23

1. EMBASSY RECEIVED INQUIRIES FROM MOST PRESS SERVICES IN BUENOS AIRES ABOUT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT. UNIFORM RESPONSE WAS THAT ANY COMMENT WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM PRESIDENT VIDELA. AFTERNOON OF 9/22 (SUBSEQUENT TO FILING OF STORY) AP CALLED TO ASK PRESS OFFICER IF EMBASSY HAD ANY COMMENT ON STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO "SOURCES CLOSE TO AMB HILL", AND RECEIVED ANOTHER NO COMMENT RESPONSE.

2. AP WAS SUFFICIENTLY COOPERATIVE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON SOURCE WHICH MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR EMBASSY TO IDENTIFY HIM CONCLUSIVELY. THERE WAS ONE SOURCE, NOT SEVERAL AS STORY IMPLIES, AND HE WAS ROBERT S. BENJAMIN, PRESIDENT OF ROBERT S. BENJAMIN AND ASSOCIATES, MEXICAN SUBSIDIARY OF BURSON-MARSTELLAR OF NEW YORK. BENJAMIN HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN TO AMBASSADOR SINCE LATTER'S APPOINTMENT TO MEXICO. BENJAMIN MET WITH AMBASSADOR DAY PRIOR TO MEETING WITH VIDELA. VIEWS AND STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO AMBASSADOR BY BANJAMIN ARE INCORRECT AND SELF-SERVING. AMBASSADOR IS PARTICULARLY OFFENDED AT IMPLICATION THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE RAISED

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ONLY AS SOP TO DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSMEN. AMBASSADOR'S

POSITION ON THIS ISSUE IS ON RECORD IN DEPARTMENT
AND WAS AMPLY DISCUSSED IN HIS RECENT CONSULTATION.

3. BANJAMIN'S REMARKS, IF CORRECTLY REPORTED,
APPEAR TO BE SELF-SERVING IN THAT HIS PARENT FIRM HAS
PUBLIC RELATIONS CONTRACT WITH GOA, BUT FIRM HAS TOLD
GOA IT UNWILLING TO BE APOLOGIST FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS, AND WOULD CANCEL THEIR LUCRATIVE CONTRACT
IF ASKED TO DO SO.

4. MEETING WITH VIDELA HAS BEEN FULLY REPORTED IN
OTHER MESSAGES. TO AVOID BEING DRAWN INTO
SITUATION IN WHICH QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS MEETING WITH
PRESIDENT VIDELA MIGHT BE RAISED, AMBASSADOR HAD
ALREADY CANCELLED SCHEDULED LUNCHEONS WITH AMERICAN
CHAMBER AND ANOTHER BUSINESSMEN'S GROUP THIS WEEK.
AMBASSADOR CONSIDERED AND REJECTED PROPOSAL TO ISSUE
STATEMENT THAT AP REPORT INCORRECT, IN THAT IT
INEVITABLY WOULD ELICIT FURTHER QUESTION ON WHICH
PART WAS INCORRECT; IT COULD KEEP THIS FRAGILE
ISSUE IN THE AIR FOR AN ADDITIONAL DAY. IN THE EVENT
THAT CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE DEPARTMENT TO RESPOND
FURTHER TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STORY, AMBASSADOR
IS FULLY PREPARED TO STAND ON HIS RECORD ON THIS
ISSUE.
HILL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, ALLEGATIONS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BUENOS06258
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760359-1315
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760929/aaaaaysx.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 JUL 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <28 OCT 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AP STORY ON AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, AR, US, (HILL, ROBERT CHARLES), (VIDELA, JORGE RAFAEL), (BENJAMIN, ROBERT S)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006